

June 8, 2006 - Slaughter Concerned by DHS Funding Cuts to Buffalo-Niagara Region

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, June 08, 2006

Slaughter Concerned by DHS Funding Cuts to Buffalo-Niagara Region
Invites Secretary Chertoff to View Firsthand Buffalo-Niagara's Landmarks, Infrastructure, and Facilities at Risk

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today issued an invitation to Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff, asking him to visit the Buffalo-Niagara region to see firsthand the dangerous mistake DHS is making in proposing massive cuts in Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) funding for the area.

"I sincerely hope that Secretary Chertoff will take me up on my offer to show him the Buffalo-Niagara region, and the many important landmarks and facilities it contains," Rep. Slaughter said. "It shows a severe lack of foresight to cut our Homeland Security funding so deeply, and I know that once Secretary Chertoff sees the area for himself, he will agree."

The Buffalo-Niagara region's UASI funds, which are essential for keeping the region secure, have been cut from \$7.2 million to \$3.7 million, despite Buffalo-Niagara's five international bridges, the Niagara Power Project, and hundreds of chemical and hazardous materials facilities. All of these important strategic considerations were ignored due to DHS's arbitrary decision, based on a flawed funding matrix, to only take into account a 10-mile radius surrounding Buffalo.

The full text of the letter follows:

Dear Secretary Chertoff,

I am writing to you with great urgency to invite you to visit the Buffalo-Niagara region to review critical homeland security needs.

I remain very concerned that the Buffalo-Niagara region's Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) funds, which are the main source of federal homeland security dollars for the area, have been cut from \$7.2 million in FY 2005 to a projected \$3.7 million in FY 2006. I believe that by touring Buffalo-Niagara you will see first-hand the severe flaws of the UASI formula in determining the region's threats and funding needs. It is my understanding that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) limited the evaluation of the area's risks to Buffalo and an arbitrary 10 mile radius around the city. This means that your agency failed to take into account a number of threats and critical infrastructure, including the Niagara Power Project, the region's five international bridges, and over 600 chemical and hazardous materials facilities in the area. Each of these sites are potential terrorist targets.

In addition, DHS announced in January that Buffalo-Niagara would no longer qualify for new UASI funding, and that any funds granted in FY 2006 would be sustainment funding for current projects. I have been seeking answers from DHS since January on why Buffalo-Niagara's eligibility has been restricted to sustainment funding. On April 21, 2006, I sent a formal letter asking for a meeting with you to discuss UASI funding, and followed-up on May 18, 2006 with a request that DHS provide me with a classified briefing. Despite the seriousness of this issue, these requests have gone unanswered.

Accordingly, I respectfully request that you accept my invitation to tour the region and its key landmarks and infrastructure. I am confident that a personal visit to the region will make it clearly evident that the Buffalo-Niagara region is not receiving the support it needs from your agency. It is critically important that the flaws in UASI formula be

addressed so that we can close the gap between current funding levels and what is needed to adequately protect Western New York. Thank you for your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Louise M. Slaughter

Member of Congress

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